

Venezuela seethes with anti-IMF anger

by José Ignacio Mussett

Since the attempted coup in Venezuela on Feb. 4, the demonstrations against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have intensified, but with a new ingredient: Everyone is asking for the resignation of President Carlos Andrés Pérez, known by the acronym of "CAP." In a desperate effort to keep CAP in power, his government has reverted to the stale old strategy of frightening the citizens with the phantom of subversion. It is not that subversion doesn't exist in Venezuela; what is happening is that it is being promoted by the government itself.

CAP, a weatherbeaten "State Department socialist," has long ruled what the Rockefeller-Kissinger crowd vaunted—until Feb. 4—as the "most stable democracy in Latin America." CAP's foreign sponsors can neither afford to keep him, nor to let him go; either way risks discrediting their whole phony democratic gameplan.

According to a report from a source in the Defense Ministry, published in the Caracas daily *El Globo* on May 26, there have been 1,376 demonstrations against CAP in Venezuela in eight months; 925 of these before Feb. 4, and 451 after that date. In the first week of June the demonstrations reached a high point of intensity, and were characterized by kidnapping, looting, raids, injuries, and death in the principal cities of the country: Caracas, Barquisimeto, Maracaibo, Maracay, Valencia, Cumaná, and Mérida, among others.

In the wake of these demonstrations, which are mostly by students, the police and the National Guard have raided several universities. Looting has been reported in Maracay, capital of Aragua; in Cumaná, capital of Sucre; in Coro and Barquisimeto. Some cities have been put under military control, but they have not succeeded in quelling the disturbances.

The 'subversion'

The government has used the theme of "subversion" as a pretext to repress the popular outcry against the measures dictated by the International Monetary Fund. In that light, the ex-director of the Military Intelligence Directorate (DIM), Herminio Fuenmayor, an intimate friend of President Carlos Andrés Pérez, "may have warned" that "there is an extreme left" that is pressuring the Armed Forces to carry out a "state coup." Interior Minister Luis Piñerúa Ordaz stated on May 28 that "measures were taken" and that "that neutralized the

actions predicted."

What measures were adopted, and what actions were neutralized? Sixty-year-old ex-guerrillas who operated in the 1960s were put under pressure, and the organizational secretary of a party was accused of being behind the "subversion." It was said that the subversion organized the national demonstrations.

Nevertheless, Defense Minister Gen. Fernando Ochoa Antich declared, according to *El Diario de Caracas* on May 30, that "the detentions are a good move, but they will not put an end to the disturbances."

Many think that the government wants to polarize the country between the false choice of corrupt democracy or Marxist subversion. In fact, it is CAP's government which has the most connections with Ibero-American Marxist guerrillas.

It is not by accident that CAP has been the mediator in every process of "pacification" on the continent, which has delivered whole countries over to communist subversives under the approving eye of the U.S. State Department, whether it be in Colombia, Peru, El Salvador, or Nicaragua. Nor is it accidental that Fidel Castro, the communist boss of Cuba, has supported and promoted CAP.

The truth

The real origin of the demonstrations lies in the brutal economic austerity under which the country lives, and which is reflected in the immense fiscal deficit. The estimates of the deficit vary from the official calculation of 80 billion bolivars, up to 350 billion bolivars—that is, \$5 billion. Instead of confronting the usury of the creditor banks and declaring a debt moratorium, CAP is putting his efforts into a combination of tax increases, new government loans, currency devaluation, and increasing privatization of state industries, besides the decree at the beginning of May lifting price controls.

Faced with this situation, the military, far from settling down in their barracks, are becoming more and more restive. One investigation by the Military Intelligence Directorate, published in the daily *El Nacional* June 6, says that of those questioned, "97.7% say that the government has not delivered on the promises it made to better the standard of living," and that "88% indicate that the government does not exercise price controls over the most basic food products."

On the other hand, a group of sergeants in the National Guard said: "We know that the jig is almost up. The majority of the sergeants in the National Guard consider Feb. 4 as a patriotic rebellion. We know that the country is moving like a wounded beast toward disaster. . . . The cost of living has climbed with a frightening speed, impelled by the violent corruption that exists at all levels, from the President of the Republic on down."

Everything seems to indicate that the seething will continue in Venezuela, while the general opinion of the population is that this system won't last much longer.